

from that of non-Aboriginal rural Canadians. Perhaps a lack of sources prevents a fuller discussion, but the issue deserves to be explicitly addressed.

Several chapters deserve individual mention. Chapters two and three offer a sweeping synthesis of Canadian public health before 1914 which would make a perfect introductory overview for students in history of medicine courses. In chapter four, Humphries' explanation of the influenza virus and how the human body responds to it stands out as one of the clearest and most engaging medical explanations I have ever read. Unfortunately chapter eight, in which Humphries sets the epidemic in the wider context of wartime Canada, is unsatisfying. The basic themes are sound: soldiers dying from the flu undermined the "worthwhile death" war myth and therefore upset Canadians, while ineffective government responses played into wider socio-political debates; together these factors led Canadians to question why their government could manage a war, but not an epidemic. However, the chapter as a whole is overly-contextualized and relies too much on long quotations. A shorter, tighter chapter would serve the purpose more successfully.

The Last Plague is neatly book-ended with glimpses into Dr. Frederick Montizambert's life and career. From cutting-edge young champion of maritime quarantine, to disappointed retiree *not* asked to head the new Department of Health, Montizambert's story makes plain the distance Canadian public health travelled in the period covered here. Scholars of interwar public health in Canada traditionally explain the post-1918 surge of public health activity as a result of three factors: the poor health of wartime military recruits; the deaths, wounds and venereal diseases of war; and the Spanish Flu epidemic. Mark Osborne Humphries's great achievement in *The Last Plague* is to show that Spanish Flu was not merely *a* factor, but was in many ways *the* factor. When innocent citizens of all stripes began dying from the flu, they blamed the federal government for failing to protect them. Intense public pressure led in 1919 to the creation of a new federal Department of Health, and Canada finally entered the modern era of promoting health and preventing disease within its boundaries, instead of trying to keep disease out.

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ISITT, Benjamin — *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. 458.

The New Left was not as new as it might have seemed; it instead needs to be understood as having deeper roots than the more traditional narrative of rupture might suggest. This is one of the key take-homes of Benjamin Isitt's expansive *Militant Minority*: that the New Lefts of the sixties, which would provide a crucial support to the path-breaking 1972 victory of Dave Barrett's New Democratic Party in British Columbia, owed much to those who came before. The Old Left, epitomized by institutions such as the Communist Party of Canada, may have waned through persecution, prosecution, and the revelation of Stalin's crimes against the Russian people; yet it, and fellow institutions such as the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union, helped sustain an oppositional culture in the province. While the CCF/NDP experienced electoral and organizational nadirs in the 1950s and 1960s, other left organizations – from Trotskyists, student movements, and the women's movement – helped carry the torch. All of this helps make what happens in the late 1960s and early 1970s all the more significant. Indeed, a reframing of the period is one

of the best contributions this monograph makes to the field. Questions of how to periodize the “sixties” have intrigued several scholars; Isitt instead frames his period as that of the “long boom.” This is a compelling approach that helps expand sixties studies.

Alongside this social and political narrative, Isitt also reclaims political economy as a fruitful field of study. The interplay between British Columbia’s resource economy, politics, and class dynamics is well fleshed out. For the “Militant Minority” functioned in a context of a political “Tug of War,” waged between labour and capital. The traditional account of post-Second World War labour relations holds that unions gained legal recognition at the expense of being encumbered in a framework of legal restrictions and regulations. Ben Isitt rejects this “postwar compromise” narrative in his local study of British Columbia. Rather, the compromise for him seems far from settled: wildcat strikes, breakaway unions, and growing nationalism characterized the British Columbian experience as the militant minority interacted with these legal structures. *Militant Minority* makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of Canadian labour, society, and the 1960s. Indeed, Isitt’s work is an exemplar of the new current of political history growing in Canada today. This book balances the political sphere, social movements, and everyday life well.

Militant Minority is generally well written and engaging. The arguments that Isitt builds are steeped in an almost exhaustive amount of primary and secondary source material. He draws on oral interviews, police records, archival documents, and a near-encyclopedia array of secondary sources. The chapters are all well crafted. His chapter on BC’s peace movement was especially engaging; his contention that the anti-war movement was a combination of Old Leftists, unionists, and a new layer of activists helps reinforce the importance of that social movement.

There are some problems with this work, however. Isitt’s use of several terms is a bit troubling. At times, perhaps due to rhetorical flourishes, the “militant minority” framework can come off as a bit homogenizing. This is sometimes unavoidable given the scope of the term (which ranges from middle-class professionals in the NDP to militant communist fishermen), but one wonders if “militant minorities” might have been a more apt descriptor. The New Left is also a bit awkwardly defined. Isitt seeks to expand the definition of the New Left, but fails to fully justify this expansion. He rightfully includes groups such as the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA), but also (questionably) Trotskyists, and others who would not have self-identified under this mantle.

At times, the book is also a bit stylistically clumsy. Isitt’s voice is drowned out by far too many block quotations. Vexingly, the 458-page book contains only 203 pages of actual text; the appendices, endnotes, and index take up more than half of the book. While many contain useful digressions and asides, the endnotes are overly long and some detail and exhaustive bibliographic citations could have been trimmed without the overall work being affected.

These admittedly minor points aside, *Militant Minority* is an engaging addition to the literature on the Canadian left, labour, and British Columbian history. Readers will find much to explore about British Columbia’s unique experience with the “long boom,” and Isitt should inspire further explorations of the so-called postwar compromise, the awkward transition between Old and New Left, and the opportunities that the new political history offers to our understanding of the Canadian past.

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